

Wireless Emergency Alerts on Your Mobile Device



The wireless industry, The FCC, and FEMA will roll-out the WEA's (Wireless Emergency Alerts) system nationwide this year.

The NWS will start utilizing this by pushing extreme weather warnings over the system in June 2012.

Tornado warnings, flash flood warnings and several other high-end warnings will go direct to wireless users in an affected county automatically if their device is compatible.



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1. What are WEA messages?

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are emergency messages sent by authorized government alerting authorities through your mobile carrier. Government partners include local and state public safety agencies, FEMA, the FCC, the Department of Homeland Security, and the National Weather Service.

2. Why is this important to me?

Alerts received at the right time can help keep you safe during an emergency. With WEA, alerts can be sent to your mobile device when you may be in harm's way, without need to download an app or subscribe to a service.

3. What types of alerts will I receive?

- Extreme weather, and other threatening emergencies in your area
- AMBER Alerts
- Presidential Alerts during a national emergency

4. What does a WEA message look like?

WEA will look like a text message. The WEA message will show the type and time of the alert, any action you should take, and the agency issuing the alert. The message will be no more than 90 characters.

5. How will I know the difference between WEA and a regular text message?

WEA messages include a special tone and vibration, both repeated twice.

6. What types of WEA messages will the National Weather Service send?

- Tsunami Warnings
- Tornado and Flash Flood Warnings
- Hurricane, Typhoon, Dust Storm and Extreme Wind Warnings
- Blizzard and Ice Storm Warnings

7. What should I do when I receive a WEA message?

Follow any action advised by the emergency message. Seek more details from local media or authorities.

8. Will I receive a WEA message if I'm visiting an area where I don't live, or outside the area where my phone is registered?

Yes, if you have a WEA-capable phone and your wireless carrier participates in the program. For information about which mobile devices are WEA-capable and carrier participation, please visit <http://www.ctia.org/wea> or contact your wireless carrier.

9. What if I travel into a threat area after a WEA message is already sent?

If you travel into a threat area after an alert is first sent, your WEA-capable device will receive the message when you enter the area.

10. When will I start receiving WEA messages?

It depends. WEA use is expected to begin in the June 2012, but many mobile devices, especially older ones, are not WEA-capable. When you buy a new mobile device, it probably will be able to receive WEA messages. For information about which mobile devices are WEA-capable, please visit <http://www.ctia.org/wea> or contact your wireless carrier.

11. Is this the same service public safety agencies have asked the public to register for?

No, but they are complementary. Local agencies may have asked you to sign up to receive telephone calls, text messages, or emails. Those messages often include specific details about a critical event. WEA are very short messages designed to get your attention in an emergency situation. They may not give all the details you receive from other notification services.

12. Will I be charged for receiving WEA messages?

No. This service is offered for free by wireless carriers. WEA messages will not count towards texting limits on your wireless plan.

13. Does WEA know where I am? Is it tracking me?

No. Just like emergency weather alerts you see on local TV, WEA are broadcast from area cell towers to mobile devices in the area. Every WEA-capable phone within range receives the message, just like every TV shows the emergency weather alert if it is turned on. TV stations, like WEA, don't know exactly who is tuned in.

14. Will a WEA message interrupt my phone conversations?

No, the alert will be delayed until you finish your call.

15. How often will I receive WEA messages?

You may receive frequent WEA messages during an emergency. Message frequency depends on the number of imminent threats to life or property in your area.

16. If, during an emergency, I can't make or receive calls or text messages due to network congestion, will I still be able to receive a WEA message?

Yes, WEA messages are not affected by network congestion.

17. What if I don't want to receive WEA messages?

You can opt-out of receiving WEA messages for imminent threats and AMBER alerts, but not for Presidential messages. To opt out, please refer to instructions from your wireless carrier or visit <http://www.ctia.org/wea> for more information.

18. How will I receive alerts if I don't have a WEA-capable device?

WEA is one of many ways you can receive emergency notifications. Other sources include NOAA Weather Radio, news media coverage, the Emergency Alert System on radio and TV broadcasts, social media, and other alerting methods offered by local and state public safety agencies. Your best use of WEA is to immediately seek additional information about the imminent threat impacting your area.